ASYLUMS FOR FOUNDLINGS:

THEIR SUPPORTERS.

FRIGHTFUL INCREASE OF INFANTICIDE.

Dear Sir,

At an inquest before Mr. Wakley, in Marylebone Workhouse, recently held, to inquire into the deaths of two children, murdered, the jury remarked on the increase of the crime, asserting—"Something must be done to stop it." The coroner stated, in reply,—"The Foundling Hospital was intended by the founder for that purpose:" but now no child can be admitted there unless on application of the mother, with proofs of her good conduct, certificates, recommendations, &c. The coroner further added—"The crime was increasing frightfully; he was afraid to state the number of cases he had already forwarded to the office." He thought "the public should demand of the Foundling the restoration of the intentions of the founder."

I remain, dear sir,

Yours truly,

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ASYLUMS FOR FOUNDLINGS.

THEIR SUPPORTERS.

In the statements respectfully submitted in the last years by "OCTOGENARIAN" to the Government and occasionally to the Public on sanitary subjects; these subjects have ever been presented in the shape of queries, to be fully considered by the experienced and influential. No unnecessary trespass has ever been hazarded upon their time and attention, on mere individual supposition; nor has any matter been put before them, until it had been admitted by learned men, worthy of the notice solicited. This especially on the subject of "Foundling asylums at the present moment." The high authorities and the mass of general experience, advanced in their favour, it is hoped, may serve as a fair excuse and justification for this exposition and appeal to the discriminating and to the benevolent.

In the last remarks it was stated, the Foundling Asylums in Spain were chiefly supported by the clergy, remarkable there for wealth and influence.

It was also asserted that benevolence towards foundlings was not confined to the clergy of Spain, but that similar benevolence had been exhibited among the clergy elsewhere, in other countries.

The authorities, proofs, and long experience for such statements are now more especially presented.

France, after the American War, from 1780 to 1790 (the Revolution) was, and long had been, as decidedly Roman, in creed and devotion, as Spain herself. The clergy in France were rich and powerful. The Queen Marie Antoinette being religious, gave great encouragement and support to the Church.

The Foundling Asylums in Spain, Italy, and in France, all prospered in that period; the *Enfans Trouves* at Paris was in its zenith, with large endowments and contributions.

Not unfrequently foundlings trained in these establishments, prospering in after life, sent contributions: the relatives of foundlings reclaimed made presents voluntarily and frequently for the care taken of their offspring. These establishments, well organised, though they received donations, were not mendicants—never begged.

Not only in France were the foundlings protected by the Queen and nobility, but at Milan the Asylum was greatly supported by Maria Teresa of Austria, by the ladies of her day, and by the Archduke Joseph, after-

wards Emperor Joseph II. of Austria. Both were adored in Italy, from the great benefactions they were constantly conferring in Lombardy and at Florence. In rich England, Asylums for Foundlings, during her general abundance were less wanted than on the continent, and were little thought of for many years. Not so now; times are altered; great destitution will drive the most orderly and loyal to atrocious crimes and to insanity. Both have been increasing in number and in atrocity for some years; and gentlemen on our juries are asserting, these evils are heart-rending—make even hardened humanity shudder; moreover, are disgraceful to the nation. The juries inquire of their recorders, of their coroners, How are these evils to be stopped? How can the long-continued massacre of innocents be averted—be prevented?

England abounds in charity,—is ever prodigal in bounty for useful purposes—proverbially so. Where can charity be better bestowed—be better applied—than upon destitute foundlings? Where more wanted? To rescue them from murder! and afterwards to give them cheap and easy training to virtuous, useful purposes. A little charity will go a great way in the salvation and improvement of infancy and early childhood. Dropped children are generally strong, healthy, well formed, and worthy of salvation. As the twig is bent so will the tree be inclined. With full-grown malefactors, hardened in iniquity, the case is wholly different. The expenses are enormous in tracing, guarding, trying, transporting, punishing—and scarcely

ever for any good result. Care is unproductive of good with them.

In conclusion, what do the high authorities state upon the subject at this late period, 1860? The Recorder of London, in his charge to the Grand Jury, states, "He never remembers a season with so many serious cases involving decision as to the highest punishment as he has to lay before them at the present time." The Western Coroner (Wakley), at an inquest on two murdered infants, one found in the Regent's Park, the other in a neighbouring street, "in reply to remarks made by the jury on the frequency, and as to the mode of stopping such horrible atrocities, the number of such crimes the coroner had to report was quite awful; and he knew no mode of prevention but to call upon the Foundling Hospital to fulfil the intentions of its founder."

What stronger evidence can be offered? Here are two important officers speaking upon the chief subject of their special occupation. Many arguments of living professionals, in the Church and out of it, are omitted, partly for brevity, and partly because, if so disposed, they can speak more ably, more effectually, on the subject, for themselves, than I can speak for them.

One distinguished divine, the Rev. Charles Marriott, A. M. (formerly Rector of Drayton), Longdale, and others, much respected professionally and socially, published a valuable Dictionary of the English Language, in 1780, under the word "Foundling," after the definition, a dropped child—a child deposited by its parents.

The Rev. C. Marriott has the following insertion :— "The Hospital for Orphans of this class (*i. e.*, for dropped and deposited) projected by Thomas Coram, supported by voluntary contributions of Nobility, and several large gifts of Parliament, is an institution that might be rendered both a support and an ornament to this kingdom."

Such were the words of the distinguished divine in 1780. Are not the necessities for real Foundling Asylums more urgent and more expedient in 1860 than they ever were before ?

Many of the present day sympathise fully with Marriott. Do not the important officers, the Recorder, and chief Coroner, and others referred to, fully confirm the assertions of Marriott, and corroborate the more recent humble remarks of the

OCTOGENARIAN

MEDICAL OFFICER IN RETIREMENT,

Again earnestly but respectfully submitted ?

November 25, 1860.